

Franklin County Board of Health and Columbus Health Department Pandemic Flu Planning and Preparedness

November 2005

- ◆ The Franklin County and Columbus Health Departments have been working for several years on pandemic flu planning and have jointly developed pandemic flu and mass vaccination clinic plans.
- ◆ The purpose of the planning is to provide an integrated, effective public health response in order to reduce mortality and morbidity and to minimize social disruption.
- ◆ Essential issues included in the planning are:
 - **Mass Vaccination Clinics:** The purpose is to vaccinate large numbers of people in a relatively short period of time. The Franklin County and Columbus Health Departments have identified 30 facilities to conduct mass vaccination clinics should the need arise. MOU's are in place with each of these locations, and clinic set-up has already been mapped out.
 - **Authority regarding Isolation and Quarantine:** The Director of the Ohio Department of Health, through Ohio Revised Code, is granted the ultimate authority for quarantine and isolation. Local Boards of Health also have powers to quarantine and isolate. Both the Franklin County and Columbus Health Departments are working with their respective legal counsel for advice about enforcement, and the role of law enforcement.
 - **Healthcare facility planning for mass care and the potential for mass fatalities:** Hospitals and healthcare providers are continually working on plans to treat exceptionally large numbers of affected people.
 - In addition, the health departments are working on a Community Unified Command System, which incorporates all disciplines that will be needed to respond during a pandemic.
- ◆ The first line of defense against any outbreak is surveillance, which gives us the ability to detect the disease in our community at the earliest possible time. The Franklin County and Columbus Health Departments are proud of our Early Warning Systems already in use daily in our community. These programs are (see Table 1 on the next page for details):
 - Communicable Disease Reporting System (CDRS)
 - Real-time Outbreak and Disease Surveillance (RODS)
 - ABSTRAC
 - Influenza Surveillance
 - BioSense
- ◆ Local health departments are the first line of response in a flu pandemic, but are dependent on the federal government for the development and distribution of protective vaccines and adequate supplies of anti-viral medications.

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- ◆ Currently, there is no vaccine available and there are not enough anti-viral medications. New vaccine production can take up to three to six months. If vaccine becomes available, the health departments would hold mass vaccination clinics for health care workers and those most at risk for infection and/or serious complications resulting from infection. Prioritization for these resources will be based on federal and state guidelines.
- ◆ Both health departments will continue to work with other local partners to respond to pandemic flu. The Franklin County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security, the hospitals and health care providers, the local law enforcement offices, fire departments and EMS units, and elected officials are all key partners in our planning and preparedness efforts.
- ◆ Exercises for biological outbreaks have already been conducted. Future plans include conducting table top exercises of our plans that include these response partners.
- ◆ In addition to working with our local partners, we will also continue to work with state and federal government agencies to prepare to respond. The CDC is doing a “full-court press” in preparing for an eventual pandemic; a national flu plan was released on November 1 and our local activities will coordinate with this plan.

Table 1 - Surveillance Activities Currently Being Conducted by the Franklin County and Columbus Health Departments

- **Communicable Disease Reporting System (CDRS)** - CDRS is the 24 hour a day combined communicable disease reporting system for all health care providers in Franklin County. It provides a method for early detection of possible outbreaks; allows for timely case follow-up and preventive interventions which will result in fewer additional cases; and, allows for reporting and analysis of disease trends.
- **Real-time Outbreak and Disease Surveillance (RODS)** - RODS monitors emergency department visit data from all hospitals for trends in symptoms and also monitors over-the-counter medication data for trends in sales of types of medications.
- **ABSTRAC** - ABSTRAC is a school absenteeism surveillance system that enables staff to monitor the absenteeism rates at participating schools.
- **Influenza Surveillance** - Staff monitors information on influenza and influenza like illnesses from October through May from health care providers in the community.
- **BioSense** - BioSense is a multi-jurisdictional data sharing program that facilitates surveillance of unusual patterns or clusters. It allows for rapid access to and analysis of health data from the local to the federal level.

Frequently Asked Questions About Pandemic Flu

What is pandemic flu?

Pandemic flu is a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza A virus appears or “emerges” in the human population, causes serious illness, and then spreads easily from person to person worldwide. Past influenza pandemics have led to high levels of illness, death, social disruption, and economic loss.

When was the last flu pandemic?

There were three influenza pandemics in the 20th century and experts believe it is only a matter of time before the first pandemic of the 21st century emerges. The worst, 1918 to 1919, killed about 500,000 people in the United States and up to 50 million worldwide.

Will avian influenza cause a pandemic?

Avian influenza (bird flu) circulating in Asia has the potential to spark a pandemic should the virus mutate and become easily spread among humans. The avian influenza currently circulating in Asia may touch off the next pandemic. Or, a new, unidentified strain may be the culprit.

While history shows the unpredictable influenza virus is capable of changing and a pandemic will happen at some future date, NO ONE KNOWS WHEN THAT MAY BE.

There is NO evidence of bird flu in the United States at this time.